

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

October 6th, 2020

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday October 6th, 2020 at 7:15pm. This was following the Commission's 6:00pm Interviews for the Capital Feasibility Study.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member Sarah Carrier. Associate member Scott Lever was not present at the start, but arrived later in the meeting. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Ali Carter and Wendy Johnnecheck

Members of the Public: Ali Carter, Josh Fenollosa, Catherine Fenollosa, Wendy Johnnecheck

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

N/A

Business in Parks During State of Emergency Program Review

Mr. Connelly provided an update on the Business in the Parks program that has occurred over the last several months due to the state of emergency. Overall, the program has gone very well. Businesses that are taking advantage of the program and going through the proper process have been easy to work with. All approved locations have been used on a regular basis with the exceptions of the Hurd Field Parking Lot and Reservoir Beach. There are still unapproved rogue groups using park space who are not going through the proper process. Mr. Connelly has received correspondence about extending the program timeframe, as the current fall end date is approaching. Ali Carter, Economic Development Coordinator, was present on the call. Ms. Carter stated that the program has been a success from her end, with over (20) businesses taking advantage of this opportunity. Ms. Carter is requesting that this program be extended and available to Town businesses until December 1st. Discussions occurred regarding this request, potential interest, and weather. Through these discussions, it was determined that it makes more sense logistically to extend the program until the 1st measurable or plowable snowfall, rather than a selected date of December 1st. Ms. Rothenberg and Mr. Lasker both spoke on the issue of rogue businesses using park space. With this continued issue, the topic of issuing approved field users physical permits or lawn signs to identify them was discussed and may be implemented in the future. Ms. Carter will be contacting businesses regarding the program extension and proper application process. Information on the program, application process, and current approved users posting at locations when in use. The Commission was in favor of extending the current Business in the Parks Program until the 1st measurable/plowable snowfall. Ms. Carter thanked Commission Members for this extension and their support of the program.

Preliminary Discussion Tennis Court Rules and Reservation

Mr. Connelly provided details on the previously discussed matter of updating court signage and the possibility of implementing an application base reservation system for all tennis courts in Arlington. After discussions with several court reservation software companies, Play Local was the only system that can provide the features desired. Play Local has the capability for the user to manage the courts selected for reservations, rules, time frames, and limitations (amount of time user can reserve daily, weekly, monthly). This system is at no cost to the user making court reservations and Play Local only requires a Play Local sign to be installed at each location.

Mr. Connelly and Ms. Rothenberg worked together to draft new tennis court rules and regulations, which was sent to Commission Members and to a representative of AHS Tennis for feedback. Specifics were discussed regarding rules and wording proposed, which is similar to signage in other local communities. The current court signage has recently led to confusion and questions. With an increase of usage, new signage and a reservation system will help improve the user experience and reduce those waiting to play on weekends. The goal of new signage is to have rules/regulations as clear and consistent, including usage timeframes, for all (3) locations in Town. Concerns were shared regarding the proposed 7:00am start time at all locations. Mr. Connelly stated this time is consistent with

the start time for other recreation facilities (fields) in Town. It was noted that changes made to the proposed signage in relation to Courts 1 & Courts 2. Two locations in Town have (5) courts and the other has (4) courts. Initially only (2) courts at each location will be available to reserve through Play Local; with others open for walk on play (additional courts can be added in future). It was also suggested that the Commission may want to look at pickle ball usage differently, as is a different sport (court size, ball, paddle, rules) and may be a challenge if played next to each other. The Commission will be looking at the possibility of lining additional pickleball courts on existing basketball courts in Town.

Mr. Walker made the motion to move forward with the Play Local reservation system and new tennis court signage, as amended. Ms. Rothenberg seconded this motion. The Commission approved the motion to move forward with the Play Local tennis court reservation system and new court signage as amended, 5-0 by roll call.

Permitting School Only Use of Town Playgrounds During School Day

Mr. Connelly noted while no formal requests or correspondence has been received, he wanted to discuss the topic of playground use during school hours. Currently, students in Town are assigned to (2) different learning cohorts for in person learning. In person learning occurs (2) days a week per cohort, with the goal to help limit the potential exposure and spread of COVID-19. Classes within these cohorts are using playgrounds for outdoor time during the school day. However, there are concerns regarding this as playgrounds have seen an increase in use by members of the public and other groups (local preschools) during the school day/right after dismissal. This includes students that are in the other the other remote learning cohort. With this, there are concerns about how this compromises the goal of having cohorts to limit exposure to others. Playgrounds are open to the public but due to current circumstances related to a health pandemic, a discussion needs to occur regarding usage and if schools should have sole access to Town playground structures during the school day and after-school hours. Commission Members discussed their personal thoughts on this topic and possible options. Following a variety of points and discussions (both positive and negatives of potentially permitting), Mr. Connelly stated that any decisions regarding this will need to be made in conjunction with Arlington Public Schools and the Arlington Board of Health. These parties will be contacted and this topic will be discussed with them on how to move forward.

New England Orienteering Event Request Menotomy Rocks Park – Wendy Johnnecheck

Wendy Johnnecheck was present to speak on her request regarding a New England Orienteering Event at Menotomy Rocks Park. Their group believes there is great interest from Arlington residents for this. Ms. Johnnecheck shared specifics on the event request to the Commission. A course would be implemented and users could visit the property as they please during this multiple day event. Participants would have the choice of downloading a printable map or using QR codes onsite to navigate the course. This event would be similar to events recently held in surrounding towns and the Spy Pond Scavenger Hunt. Mr. Connelly noted that COVID-19 guidelines, similar to the Spy Pond event, will need to be followed. Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to approve the New England Orienteering Event to occur at Menotomy Rocks Park from October 17th to October 24th. This motion was seconded by Ms. Canniff. Commissioners approved the motion for this event to occur as outlined, 5-0 by roll call.

Correspondence Received: Feedback on Reservoir Project

Please see the *Arlington Reservoir Phase 1 & 2* section below under Capital Project Updates.

Capital Project Update

Lussiano Playground Complete

The Lussiano Playground is complete and opened last week. The Commission and Mr. Connelly are both very happy overall with the project. Additional temporary fencing will be added to several grassy areas to help limit user impact and support grass growth. Concerns were discussed about the raised sandbox, which has already seen issues (i.e. throwing of sand, children standing on top of feature, sand covering entire walkway). The Commission will monitor this with the possibility of changes in the future. Mr. Connelly stated again how happy they are overall with the complete design and outcome of this project.

Arlington Reservoir Phase 1 and 2

Mr. Connelly reported that the electrical access issue for the pump house has finally been resolved and there is now power access. Once training on the new filtration system occurs with DPW and Recreation staff, the water level of the Reservoir will be lowered. Mr. Connelly stated that the pilot path has been graded and requested Commissioners to view this. QR codes have been placed on site to collect user feedback. Mr. Connelly will be meeting with KZLA this week and asked all Commissioners to share any additional feedback on the latest design set. Mr. Lasker noted that he believes more design edits need to occur. Ms. Mayer and Mr. Connelly met with KZLA previously and noted that the firm is aware that some design specifics are missing/need to be changed. Ms. Mayer noted that KZLA is working on setting up a site walkthrough with the Arlington and Lexington Conservation Commissions, stating that KZLA is possibly waiting for their feedback before making any additional design edits. Mr. Walker asked about the current set of plans for review. Mr. Connelly believes these at 90% complete, but will confirm. Mr. Lasker stated he believes there needs to more focus on the walking trail aspect of the project and that a site walk should occur. He does not want to lose sight of conversations around invasive removals and surface materials being used. Mr. Connelly agreed noting a variety of aspects including invasive, bench placement, access points, etc. He plans on setting up a site walk with the Commission. Ms. Mayer also agreed, noting that the Commission needs to look at survey numbers regarding access points and where investments will be made based on usage amount and terrain. Mr. Connelly also noted that purchasing has approved this phase to be bid as two separate projects.

Feasibility Study Interview Discussion

Mr. Connelly requested Commission Members share their thoughts and feedback on the interviews conducted with firms that submitted for the planned Feasibility Study. Interviews with (2) different firms were conducted by Commission Members this evening prior to the Commission Meeting. Separate interviews were conducted with representatives from Stantec and Activitas respectively. Mr. Connelly is looking for a recommendation and vote on this matter, as he is eager for the project to begin. Commission Members each had the opportunity to share their feedback on the interviews, pros and cons of selecting the design firm in relation to the proposed project. Each Commission Member also made a recommendation for which design firm should be selected. Commissioners were very impressed by both firms and believed each could complete the project efficiently. Ultimately, it was determined by the Commission that they would like to move forward with Stantec for the Feasibility Study, as it was felt that their experience and approach is more applicable to this project in Arlington.

Snow Melt Pit for Ed Burns Arena

Improvements to the snow melt pit at the Ed Burns Arena currently taking place are scheduled to be completed in the next week.

Task Group Updates

Mr. Lasker provided an update on behalf of the Mountain Biking Task Group. The group recently completed a site visit at Menotomy Rocks Park. Mr. Lasker believes this was successful, as it gave insight on the size of the property, terrain, and potential opportunities there. So far, the Mountain Biking Task Group has had site visits at the Crusher Lot, Hill's Hill, and Menotomy Rocks Park. Mr. Lasker noted the group has seen potential at all (3) locations visited. Each site is unique in terms of property type, neighborhood setting, etc. The task group will be visiting Turkey Hill for a site walk through soon. Mr. Lasker noted that there is the potential opportunity to have smaller features at multiple different sites if any projects are to occur. This was compared to both playgrounds and elementary school systems, as there can be several located in different areas of Town with each being unique. Mr. Connelly noted a reference that Stantec representatives made during the feasibility study interview of pump track experience. It was noted that the Commission could look into the possibility of a small pump track, if it makes sense at McClennan Park. With the skateboard park already in place and as a location with a parking lot, this location may potentially be a good fit. It was also noted that bikers currently use the skate park and that possible work may need to take place on that existing infrastructure. The task group will compile a report which includes the pros and cons of each site visited and share this with the Commission in the future.

Recreation and Rink Updates

Public Skating Response

Mr. Connelly shared with the Commission information on Public Skating. This included information on the preregistration process and policies relating to COVID-19. Overall, the first several sessions have gone well, with most selling out (limit 25 individuals per session). Mr. Vaillette shared information on the department's general programming. Recreation began (50) sections of program last week. Many fall program sections are at their max capacity for enrollments. All general programs are following specific COVID-19 protocols and things have gone well so far.

Approval of Minutes – September 8th, 2020 & September 22nd 2020

The approval of the September 8th & September 22nd Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes was discussed. It was determined that no edits needed to be made for the September 8th Minutes. The Commission also tabled the approval of the September 8th Minutes to allow more time for review. The motion to approve the September 8th Commission Meeting Minutes was made by Ms. Rothenberg. This motion was seconded by Ms. Canniff. The Commission voted to approve the September 8th Meeting Minutes with, 4-0-1 by roll call. Mr. Walker abstained from this vote as he was not present at the September 8th Meeting.

Comments and Items For Future Meetings

- Block Scheduling
- Afterschool and Preschool Program Review Period
- Off-Leash Dogs (*Discussed current usage and issues. Suggestion made to communicate/reminder members of public about Off-Leash rules and regulations. Also suggested to discuss issues with Animal Control Officer.*)
- Town Playground Usage During School Day

Other

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 9:02pm.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.